

# INVITING MEXICAN BUYERS TO TRAVEL TO THE U.S. TO MEET WITH YOUR COMPANY? ... TAKE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION INTO CONSIDERATION

The most effective way to convince a potential buyer of the quality and value of your product is for them to see your products firsthand. But the cost and paperwork involved in shipping samples can become prohibitive. Many businessmen invite potential Mexican buyers to travel to Idaho visit their company to showcase their products, trusting that the Mexican buyer will then place orders based on the competitive costs and high quality of the product. If this is an option you are considering, plan on waiting at least 3 months!

Three months is the average time it takes for a Mexican citizen to obtain a visa to enter into the United States. It is not as simple or trouble-free as some may think. Every Mexican citizen needs to obtain a visa along with a passport in order to enter the United States. The following is a break down of the process.

Mexican businessmen or civilians wanting to enter the United States first need to make an appointment by phone with the US Embassy for an interview. From the time of the phone call until they actually meet with the Embassy's representative can be as long as 9 weeks. Once the interview has taken place, the visa is then sent to them via mail. This can take another 3 weeks. As of November 2002, the average time to receive a visa was approximately 2 – 2 ½ months. During the holidays, the estimated wait time to receive an appointment is much longer.

The following recommendations can assist you in the process of inviting potential customers to the United States. If you are currently doing business with Mexican companies, speak with them immediately and encourage them to apply now for a visa in the event of any future travels to the US. This could save you a lot of time and unexpected delays. Even if you are not sure of future business interactions, it is always better for them to at least have the visa and be ready, than to not have the visa and be not able to travel to Idaho. It is recommended that this request to obtain a visa be part of the initial conversations with any potential Mexican buyer.

Some tips for your Mexican business partners to qualify for a US visa are: have major financial commitments in Mexico and have a strong obligatory responsibility to their family in Mexico as well. This will assure the US Embassy of their prompt return back to Mexico. Further information on the application process can be found on the US Immigration Services web site at [www.usais.org](http://www.usais.org).

Obviously, time is something you need to consider when you are preparing to invite a potential or current Mexican consumer to the US. Prepare now and avoid the obstacles and delays.